request of the State Government of Chhattisgarh for opening of a Regional Office of the Central Water Commission at Raipur was considered. However, in the present set up it was not found feasible to open a Regional Office of the Central Water Commission at Raipur.

Provision of safe drinking water

3028 DR. K MALAISAMY: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state.

(a) whether it is a fact that more than 170 million Indians do not have access to safe drinking water;

(b) if so, what are the thrust measures and serious initiatives envisaged with priority to tackle this important basic problem leading to several ailments and diseases; and

(c) whether there can be a time-frame to provide safe drinking water to every citizen of India?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI JAY PRAKASH NARAYAN YADAV): (a) As informed by the Department of Drinking Water Supply, Ministry of Rural Development, Water is a State subject and as such the State Governments are primarily responsible to provide drinking water to the rural habitations. To supplement the efforts of the State Governments in this direction, financial assistance and technical support is rendered by the Central Government to the State Governments through a Centrally Sponsored Scheme namely Accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme (ARWSP) under Rajiv Gandhi National Drinking Water Mission of Department of Drinking Water Supply, Ministry of Rural Development. State Governments are, however, competent to plan, sanction, implement and execute rural water supply schemes for the coverage of rural habitations from funds provided under ARWSP.

The Department of Drinking Water Supply, Ministry of Rural Development have further informed that as per the Comprehensive Action Plan 1999 and subsequent coverage reported by States/UTs, 97.02% habitations are fully covered, 2.73% are partially covered and 0.21% habitations are not covered.

(b) The Department of Drinking Water Supply, Ministry of Rural Development have informed that a community based National Rural Drinking

Water Quality Monitoring and Surveillance Programme has been launched in the country to tackle chemical contamination, which aims at testing various parameters for all drinking water sources by the grassroot level works in each Panchayat by simple-to-use field test kits with provision for one field test kit each for every Gram Panchayats in the country for this purpose. Further, with effect from 1st April, 2006, it has been decided to retain upto 20% of ARWSP funds to mitigate water quality problems on focused manner.

(c) As informed by the Department of Drinking of Water Supply, Ministry of Rural Development, Drinking Water Supply is one of the six components of Bharat Nirman which has been conceived as a plan to be implemented in four years from 2005-06 to 2008-09 for building rural infrastructure. The objective of the said component is to cover 55067 uncovered habitations as well as to address problem of slipped back and quality affected habitations.

Indo-Pak discussion on water resources

3029. SHRI RAVULA CHANDRA SEKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether there has been some convergence of views following detailed technical discussions between India and Pakistan at the level of Water Resources Secretaries; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and the present position thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI JAY PRAKASH NARAYAN YADAV): (a) and (b) The last Secretary Level talks between India and Pakistan on Tulbul Navigation Project, as part of Composite Dialogue, were held from 22nd to 23rd June 2006 at Islambad at, the level of Water Resources Secretaries. The two sides exchanged views on the project and had a better udnerstanding of each other's views. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to the Indus Water Treaty 1960 and agreed to continue discussions during the next round of Composite Dialogue with a view to resolving the issue in accordance with the provisions of the Treaty.